United Nations S/PV.8288

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8288th meeting
Thursday, 14 June 2018, 3.15 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Nebenzia/Mr. Polyanskiy	(Russian Federation)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Solíz
	China	Mr. Zhang Dianbin
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Djédjé
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Esono Mbengono
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Michon
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Temenov
	Kuwait	Mr. Almunayekh
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Sweden	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Ms. Tachco

Agenda

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2018/541)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2018/541)

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Mali to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Tiéman Hubert Coulibaly, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/541, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali.

I now give the floor Mr. Lacroix.

Mr. Lacroix (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to share with Security Council members the most recent developments on the political, security and humanitarian situation in Mali, as reflected in the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/541).

The 12 months since the adoption of resolution 2364 (2017), in June 2017, were the most encouraging in terms of progress in the peace process since the signing, three years ago, of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, which was the outcome of the Algiers process. At the same time, the security environment remains volatile, and unfortunately it has led to the loss of life among the civilian population, the Malian defence and security forces, the French Barkhane force and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). The number of MINUSMA Blue Helmets to have lost their lives in Mali over the past year as a result of attacks has raised the total number to 101 since the deployment of the Mission.

It was in order to pay tribute to those fallen peacekeepers that the Secretary-General decided to visit Mali to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of United Nations peacekeeping on 29 May. That visit enabled him to observe the spirit of dialogue and collective responsibility that enabled the Malian parties to achieve considerable progress in implementing the Agreement in recent months and to lay the foundation for credible, inclusive and peaceful elections.

Progress in the implementation of the peace Agreement includes, inter alia, the establishment of interim authorities in the five regions in the north of Mali; the strengthening of the Operational Coordination Mechanism in Gao and its establishment in Kidal and Timbuktu, with 160 and 47 combatants, respectively, to date; and the start of the pre-registration phase for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, which is an extremely important element in that context. That progress reflects a positive momentum in the peace process, which inspires hope. However, it falls short and comes after three years of delays and persistent obstacles in the implementation of the Agreement. Furthermore, during the past year, some important steps to sustain the peace process and strengthen political dialogue have not been achieved. I would mention in that regard, among others, the charter for national reconciliation, which was intended to strengthen the gains of the Conference of National Understanding, held in March 2017, and to constitutional reform, which was postponed until after the presidential election. Moreover, the involvement of civil society, in particular women, in the peace process remains insufficient to date. Peace must be built on an inclusive and participatory foundation to ensure its sustainability and ownership by all.

That imperative is all the more important given that the past two weeks have been marked by worrying political tensions, fuelled by the upcoming presidential election, which is scheduled to be held in six weeks' time. Those tensions culminated in demonstrations in Bamako on 2 June, where there were violent clashes among supporters of the opposition and Malian security forces. That violence is regrettable, and the Secretary-General condemned the ban on the holding of the demonstration by the Malian authorities. Subsequently, the authorization of a new request to demonstrate introduced by the opposition and the peaceful holding

of the march on 8 June bode well for an easing of the situation, which is welcome and which we must encourage and help the Malian actors to maintain.

The presidential election is a crucial stage and should be a milestone in the consolidation of democracy in Mali. Priority must given to cooperation among all actors and the promotion an inclusive and constructive political dialogue that is conducive to the peaceful settlement of disputes, so that the conditions are met for the holding of peaceful elections. MINUSMA will continue to play an active role in that regard, including by continuing to support the Malian authorities and political actors through the good offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General as well as by providing logistical and technical support and contributing to security for electoral activities. The Special Representative's good offices have already helped to support key preparatory steps in the electoral process, such as the review of the electoral law, but they have also facilitated dialogue among political actors and eased tensions following the demonstrations by the opposition on 2 June.

We think it pertinent to stress that the United Nations is not in a position to certify the election results, as requested by the opposition parties, as that activity is not part of the mandate of MINUSMA. Furthermore, any certification exercise of an electoral process must involve the whole process, and not only the results of the elections, and would have required prior authorization by the Security Council.

Following the elections, our attention should be focused on mobilizing all actors in order to generate new and significant steps towards the implementation of key institutional reforms outlined in the Agreement. I welcome the publication of the first report of the independent observer, presented to the members of the Agreement Monitoring Committee on 28 May at its most recent regular meeting. The report underscores the importance for the parties to focus their efforts on the strategic pillars of the Agreement relating to long-term objectives, including the creation of a new governance architecture for Mali, the reconstitution and redeployment of a representative national army and the creation of a development zone for the north. Furthermore, we hope that the work of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2374 (2017), concerning Mali, can help to remove some of the obstacles that continue to undermine the implementation of the Agreement.

The worrying situation in central Mali presents us with even more complex challenges. The political and security environment in that region has highlighted not only the lack of political dialogue, but also the challenges posed to democratic and territorial governance, which have been characterized by an erosion of the presence and legitimacy of the State institutions.

It was in order to help respond to the multifaceted challenges facing Mali and to breathe new life into the implementation of the peace Agreement that the Secretary-General mentioned in his report the idea of a common vision — a pact — for peace that would serve as a catalyst to strengthen the inclusive nature of the political process before and after the elections. That initiative would involve the Government, the United Nations, the Security Council and other international and regional partners. Its primary objective would be to reaffirm the centrality of the peace Agreement in resolving the crisis in Mali and to underscore once again the commitment of the United Nations to the mechanisms provided for in the Agreement, in particular the Agreement Monitoring Committee, chaired by Algeria, whose role is essential in international mediation. The initiative could also cover the key institutional reforms I have just mentioned, the implementation of which should be accelerated the day after the elections.

(*spoke in English*)

To better support such an integrated strategic approach at the political level, the United Nations must also take steps to improve integration at the operational level, while leveraging the comparative advantages of its different agencies, funds and programmes.

In that spirit, the recently concluded independent strategic review of MINUSMA recommended that the United Nations country team take the lead in humanitarian, recovery, development and peacebuilding efforts, including supporting Government efforts to deliver long-awaited peace dividends in an equitable, responsible and inclusive manner, including improving access to basic social services, such as education, health and clean water, as well as providing more livelihood opportunities, in particular for women and youth. United Nations efforts to prevent violent extremism should also be based on a coordinated, cross-sector strategy. To support those objectives, the review team called upon the United Nations country team to enhance its presence in the north and centre of the country.

With regard to MINUSMA, the Secretary-General is recommending a series of adjustments suggested by the review, aimed at underscoring the primacy of politics in the Mission's role. That will involve a shift in focus, prioritization and the implementation of the Mission's mandated tasks to maximize its role in support of the Agreement and in amplifying the peace process.

The Mission is also to assess its current physical footprint against political priorities, factoring in the constraints posed by the operational theatre, the difficulties in generating resources for the United Nations efforts in Mali and how to more effectively work with other stakeholders supporting peace and stability in Mali. That will include adopting a more tailored approach to the protection of civilians, particularly in the centre of the country, which is characterized by complex and localized dynamics, and leveraging non-force assets.

Any changes in the Mission's configuration will be carefully evaluated, in consultation with partners on the ground, and a timeline will be developed to ensure a sequenced approach. In that regard, the Secretariat has worked on an implementation framework. The support and assistance of MINUSMA should be regularly reviewed not only on the basis of progress in the implementation of the peace agreement but also with regard to governance and political reforms, in line with the stated objectives of the proposed mobilization for peace.

Moreover, given the critical juncture at which Mali now finds itself a few weeks ahead of the elections, but also in view of their aftermath, we will intensify our reporting and monitoring efforts, including through the use of consolidated benchmarks, drawing on the peace Agreement and the initiative for peace, as well as the plan for the implementation of the recommendations of the strategic review. In line with that objective, we would wish for future iterations of the report of the Secretary-General to focus more closely on describing progress against those benchmarks.

MINUSMA will continue to cooperate closely with other security actors operating in Mali, including the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), Operation Barkhane and the European Union Training Mission in Mali. I welcome this opportunity to reiterate the steadfast support of the United Nations for the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, to which MINUSMA stands ready to provide operational and logistical support, as mandated by the Security Council.

At the same time, I wish to recall that States members of the G-5 Sahel remain accountable for the conduct of operations, with full respect for human rights, international law and international humanitarian law. Such gross human rights violations as those reportedly perpetrated in Boulikessi on 19 May by elements of the Malian armed forces operating under the Joint Force must, and will, be effectively addressed through the appropriate mechanisms. In that context, the Government of Mali has already adopted a number of measures to address that very serious situation. To that end, MINUSMA continues to support the ongoing investigations by the Malian and G-5 Sahel Joint Force authorities.

Allow me to conclude by underlining that stronger support to the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, including through predictable and sustainable financial resources, is critical not only to ensuring the success of the Joint Force but also to reducing the risk of human rights violations during counter-terrorism operations by increasing the monitoring and oversight capacity.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Lacroix for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Michon (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations for his very enlightening statement. I also welcome the presence around the table of the Malian Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and thank him for having made the trip to New York in order to participate in our work.

As the Secretary-General emphasized in his report (S/2018/541), support for the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali must remain the foremost priority of us all in Mali. Three years after its signing, it is clear that many of the commitments made have still not been implemented. Such delays, which are partly due to the lack of political will on the part of the stakeholders, are worrying, first, because they increasingly call into question the very relevance of the Agreement and, secondly, because there can be no lasting stability in Mali, and more broadly in the Sahel, without the full implementation

of the Agreement. It is therefore urgent that significant progress be made.

In that context, we noted with satisfaction the mobilization of the Prime Minister of Mali and the progress made in recent months. The Secretary-General's meeting with the parties during his visit to Mali last month affirmed that positive momentum, which must now be continued and built on. For us, in the short term, that means strengthening the mixed units of the Operational Coordination Mechanism in northern Mali, ensuring the effective functioning of the local authorities and initiating the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process. We will follow those various elements closely over the coming months.

The responsibility of the international community, in accordance with the actual terms of the peace Agreement, is to take the necessary measures to encourage all the parties to meet their commitments. In that regard, the first report of the independent observer is a useful contribution. We encourage him to continue his work by issuing regular reports that identify the obstacles, define the responsibilities and make recommendations that will enable us to move forward. All Malian actors must also be aware that the Security Council is closely following the implementation of their commitments. In that regard, France has started work on identifying those responsible for hindering the implementation of the Agreement on the ground. Failure to implement the commitments contained in the most recent road map would lead us to having to broaden the scope of individuals that could be subject to sanctions measures.

France fully shares the concerns expressed over the situation in central Mali, which calls for a strong response from the Malian authorities with the full support of the international community and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). It is crucial that such a response be based on a balanced approach that combines action in the area of security and development, governance and human rights efforts. In that regard, we are deeply concerned about the allegations of various cases of human rights violations in the context of counter-terrorism operations undertaken by the Malian armed forces. Such allegations must be promptly investigated and the perpetrators prosecuted if they are proven. The recommendations made by MINUSMA in the context of the human rights due diligence policy must also be fully implemented. The support that MINUSMA can provide to the Malian armed forces and the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel is, of course, linked to that.

The upcoming electoral cycles over the next months, in particular the presidential elections, will be a significant milestone for Malian democracy. It is especially important that the presidential election be conducted in a peaceful, credible and transparent way. The actions of the Government to enhance the credibility of the electoral process at the technical level are in the right direction. Those efforts must be continued and accompanied by the resumption of a constructive dialogue between the Government and the opposition. In that regard, the good offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the representative of the African Union on the ground should be welcomed. Lastly, the right to peaceful protest and freedom of expression must be respected and all actors must show the necessary restraint throughout the electoral cycle.

Given those many challenges, the renewal of the MINUSMA mandate for another 12 months is absolutely essential to the stability of Mali and the region. The recommendations of the strategic review, which are included in the Secretary-General's report, provide us with an opportunity to ensure that the resources that we are collectively harnessing in Mali are used in the most effective way possible. We want to make the best use of them.

In that context, France will approach the renewal of the mandate with several objectives: first, promoting a clear and realistic mandate with a limited number of priorities that are adapted to the situation; secondly, doing the utmost to ensure that the Mission has the necessary capacities to discharge its mandate and encourage every effort to reduce its security exposure through targeted and adapted measures that are coordinated with all the stakeholders on the ground; thirdly, encouraging the Mission to better communicate the specific nature of its mandate and its work to the local actors, while recognizing that it is part of a broader security architecture, where each force has its added value and shares the same goal, namely, support for the implementation of the peace Agreement; fourthly, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach, particularly in response to the increasing threat to the central part of the country, in support of the Malian authorities; and lastly, fifthly, recalling the importance

of the good offices role of the Mission for the smooth running of the upcoming electoral cycles.

Finally, more broadly, France is convinced that support for the implementation of the peace Agreement must continue to remain the strategic objective of the Mission. That strategic objective must be pursued within the framework of a partnership approach among Mali, the Council and the United Nations and on the basis of reciprocal commitments, the implementation of which will be regularly monitored. Against that backdrop, we fully support the Secretary-General's recommendation for a pact for peace, to be concluded with the Malian authorities following the forthcoming presidential elections.

Everyone should bear in mind that maintaining a mission as large and exposed as MINUSMA in its current configuration is not sustainable without substantial progress on the peace process track. We must therefore move forward together, in a responsible manner, in order to ensure its success. France's unwavering commitment can be counted on in that regard.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me to thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his very insightful briefing. I also extend my thanks to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali, Mr. Coulibaly, for joining us here in the Security Council.

On the fifth anniversary of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), it is time to take stock of the Mission's achievements and the remaining challenges. I will address three main elements: first, the political situation; secondly, the mandate; and, thirdly, the effectiveness of peacekeeping.

First, with regard to the political situation, progress in the peace process has been hard fought. While we welcome recent promising developments, we must recognize that the record over the past five years has been bleak. The Malian parties must together ensure expedited progress in the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, including the full and effective participation of women.

We welcome the Secretary-General's suggestions to give new impetus to the political process. That requires the development of a pact for peace based on clear criteria. Our patience is running out. The forthcoming elections will be an important test for the Malian parties, who will have to prove their commitment to the country's stability. We call on the Malian authorities to ensure an inclusive electoral process and political dialogue, leaving space for debate and dissenting voices. On that point, we recall the need for all actors, including law enforcement agencies, to act with restraint.

Secondly, with respect MINUSMA's mandate, the Mission's support to the political process and its mediation have proved very valuable. We share the Secretary-General's view that the key to the Mission's success lies in setting clear priorities. First and foremost, the MINUSMA must focus on supporting the implementation of the main provisions of the Agreement — the effective establishment of legitimate State bodies and services, decentralization, security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes and reconciliation.

Furthermore, allegations of violations of international humanitarian law and human rights laws are too often not prosecuted. The importance of the Mission's accountability tasks, including in its judicial and corrections work, cannot be minimized. While, as mentioned by the Under-Secretary-General, MINUSMA has a role to play in central Mali with regard to reconciliation and conflict prevention at the local level, that should not affect its primary mission in the north.

The repercussions of Mali's instability are felt beyond the country's borders, above all throughout the Sahel and in Europe. The stability of Mali, and the region as a whole, is crucial in combating threats such as human trafficking and illegal migration, terrorism and organized crime. Coordination and cooperation between the various security actors are essential if we are to respond effectively to those problems, including the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, Operation Barkhane and the European Union Mission.

In order to define effective strategies to support sustainable peace and stability, MINUSMA must also improve its information on how the illegal economy influences conflict dynamics in Mali and beyond. That includes trafficking in drugs, weapons and human beings. Cooperation with United Nations entities, such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, is crucial in that regard.

Thirdly, and finally, I will address the concerns regarding the effectiveness of peacekeeping. After five years in existence, we can consider that MINUSMA

has reached maturity. Critical reflection on the Mission can improve the achievement of its mandate. The comprehensive action plan drawn up in response to the Santos Cruz report and the measures already taken to implement it are to be welcomed. We urge the United Nations to implement the recommendations as soon as possible. Given the complex context in which the Mission takes place, compartmentalization must be avoided. As the Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte stated at the launch of Action for Peacekeeping, during our presidency of the Council in March, an integrated approach must be firmly applied at both strategic and operational levels, not only within the framework of the Mission but also in strategic coordination with the United Nations country team (see S/PV.8218). In that context, we call upon the United Nations to develop a mission-wide strategic plan as soon as possible.

In conclusion, I salute all the men and women who have done their utmost to promote peace and stability in Mali since the launch of MINUSMA. We pay particular tribute to the 174 peacekeepers who paid the highest price in defending and promoting lasting peace in Mali.

Mr. Djédjé (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix for his excellent briefing on the political, security and humanitarian situations in Mali. I would also like to thank Mr. Tiéman Hubert Coulibaly, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali, for his presence here today. I welcome him to New York.

My delegation would like to commend the personal commitment of Secretary-General António Guterres to work for the definitive settlement of the Malian crisis, as demonstrated by his visit on 29 and 30 May, which enabled him to exchange views with all stakeholders on the challenges to be met with a view to the advent of peace and stability in Mali.

Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the encouraging progress made in the implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, which remains the appropriate framework for all current initiatives to restore peace and stability in that country. My delegation therefore urges all stakeholders to take ownership of the road map, adopted on 22 March, with a view to the diligent implementation of the priority actions defined by the Agreement Monitoring Committee, in accordance with the recommendations of resolution 2295 (2016).

In that connection, the presidential elections on 29 July constitute an important means of settling the crisis in Mali. My country calls on the United Nations Integrated Multidimensional Mission for Stabilization in Mali (MINUSMA) to invest in securing the elections by lending technical and logistical support to the Malian armed forces, as well as redeploying administration throughout the country.

The security situation remains concerning in parts of Mali, due to ongoing asymmetrical attacks by terrorist groups against civilians and MINUSMA camps, as well as community violence in central Mali. My delegation therefore invites the international community to provide MINUSMA with the logistical capacity required to prevent attacks and protect convoys, such as early warning equipment, armoured personnel carriers and medical evacuation and health-care helicopters. Furthermore, the deployment of force multipliers would bolster MINUSMA's capabilities and enable it to better protect United Nations staff and civilians.

With regard to the protection of civilians, in particular in the centre of the country, which has fallen prey to inter-community violence, it is vital to deploy United Nations police units and boost the capacity of the local police in order to restore State authority. With regard to the humanitarian situation, which is also a source of concern, Côte d'Ivoire notes with regret that the 2018 humanitarian response plan, which was assessed at $263 million, has been financed at just 24 per cent.

Côte d'Ivoire welcomes ongoing efforts to operationalize the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), in accordance with resolution 2391 (2017). A strengthened partnership between MINUSMA and the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel, as well as greater coordination with all forces on Malian territory — the Operation Barkhane forces, the Malian armed forces and the European Union Training Mission in Mali — will be a valuable asset in combating terrorism. It is also important to continue building the capacities of the Malian armed forces so as to enable the Government to take gradual and irreversible responsibility for the security of the country and of its people.

My delegation commends Ellen Margrethe Løj for her outstanding work at the head of an independent team within the framework of the MINUSMA strategic

review. The sound conclusions and relevant proposals bode well for a better understanding of the current security and political situation in Mali as we seek to renew MINUSMA's mandate. Côte d'Ivoire agrees with the experts of the independent team that combating terrorism and organized transnational crime is a challenge for regional security and therefore requires a coordinated and comprehensive approach. My country endorses the proposed pact for peace between the Malian Government, the Security Council, the United Nations and international partners.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire supports the recommendation of the Secretary-General to renew MINUSMA's mandate. It urges all stakeholders in Mali to redouble their efforts to implement the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in order to achieve a final settlement of the crisis.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): I thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his briefing and welcome His Excellency Mr. Coulibaly to the Council today.

The United Kingdom continues to support the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). We recognize the challenging circumstances in which its military and civilian personnel operate and unequivocally condemn the recent attacks against MINUSMA personnel. MINUSMA must receive the tools it needs to protect its personnel adequately. At the same time we applaud the positive impact MINUSMA has had, in particular in supporting the recent progress on the peace agreement ahead of the upcoming elections.

As the Secretary-General makes clear in his recent report (S/2018/541), the deteriorating humanitarian and security situation in Mali is of great concern. During the June-to-August lean season this year, more than 4.3 million people will require humanitarian assistance. That is more than a quarter of the population. United Kingdom is one of the largest humanitarian donors to the Sahel region. Between 2015 and 2018, it has provided over $250 million of humanitarian aid, with an additional $67 million of assistance to the region in 2018. The international community in Mali and the Government must fulfil their humanitarian pledges and commitments in the light of the impending crisis.

Political stability is crucial in order to address the root causes of the situation in Mali. In that regard, the United Kingdom welcomes the recent positive steps taken by the parties towards the implementation of some of the key provisions of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and the Prime Minister's support to implement the agreement ahead of the upcoming elections. I agree with the representative of France on the key concrete next steps that must be taken.

The Council has become increasingly concerned about the slow pace of the implementation of the peace agreement at a time when MINUSMA troops are paying the price with their lives in unacceptable numbers. I understand that elections are under way, but I would urge the Malian Foreign Minister in the most respectful and friendly way to take back to all parties to the peace agreement and to the presidential candidates the expectation of the Council for fast and deep implementation of the agreement. Patience is running out.

It is also important that the key constituencies of Malian society, including women, play a central role in the implementation of the peace agreement and beyond. As we all know, an inclusive peace agreement is much more likely to succeed. We hope the Malian Government will observe the target it set for itself in its law of 2015 for a 30 per cent minimum representation for women in elected and nominated positions. The upcoming elections, if they are credible, free and fair, present an opportunity for Malians to express their democratic rights and commitments. Above all, the elections should not be the subject of violence. We call for calm from all parties at this time and for MINUSMA to support dialogue among the parties throughout the upcoming electoral cycles.

The United Kingdom is concerned about recent reports of human rights abuses in Mali and in particular those allegedly committed by the armed forces. The failure to protect civilians will erode trust in the Government and feed extremist recruitment narratives. We call upon all parties to comply with their obligations and put an end to violations and abuses.

As we begin negotiations on MINUSMA's mandate renewal, I again underline the United Kingdom's strong support for the Mission. It is important that we address the recommendations in the strategic review through that process to continue to improve MINUSMA's effectiveness on the ground. That includes further development of a long-term strategy for MINUSMA, a clear prioritization of tasks and recognition that other actors, including the United Nations country team, may be better placed to deliver results. While

we recognize the logic of consolidating MINUSMA's presence, we believe that maintaining the current geographical focus is important for the implementation of the peace agreement and the long-term stabilization of the country.

Lastly, it is essential that all actors across Mali and the Sahel take a coordinated and integrated approach, in line with the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel. A solution that addresses the underlying causes of instability is the only way to ensure long-term security in the region. The ultimate solution will be a political one, underpinned by effective security and economic development. It must be inclusive, gender-responsive and ensure the full and equal participation of the whole of society, including in particular women, in order to succeed. It must provide economic opportunities and present an attractive alternative to violence and extremism. That is the best way to improve the lives of those who live in Mali and the best way to improve our collective peace and security.

Ms. Tachco (United States of America): I very much thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his briefing. I welcome Foreign Minister Coulibaly.

(*spoke in French*)

It is a pleasure to see him here again in New York.

(*spoke in English*)

We are gravely concerned about the continued deterioration of the security situation and the corresponding worsening of the humanitarian situation in Mali. We are alarmed about the fact that over the past six months, nine peacekeepers and seven contractors of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) have been killed and 36 peacekeepers injured. The ongoing attacks against MINUSMA across central and northern Mali present a serious challenge to the meaningful implementation of MINUSMA's mandate. The number of casualties, coupled with the limited progress on the ground, highlight the need to think carefully about what we ask of MINUSMA.

The strategic review that the Under-Secretary-General briefed us on has provided an opening for a difficult conversation. Looking at the Council's observations over time and the helpful and specific recommendations provided by the review team, it is time to take action. This month, it is incumbent on the Council to contemplate how we can enable MINUSMA to support a more secure Mali and ensure that it makes substantive progress towards the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali.

First, we look towards July, when we expect free, fair, credible and transparent elections, with the full and meaningful participation of women. Successful elections will be essential to securing the gains that Mali has achieved so far. Establishing a meaningful dialogue among the Government, the political opposition and civil society, and ensuring that the political space is open for peaceful demonstration are important to ensuring that all parties see the elections as credible. We urge all stakeholders to resolve any disputes through established mechanisms, in accordance with the law.

We express our sincere appreciation to the Prime Minister and leadership of the signatory armed groups for their efforts over the past few months to find common ground and build momentum towards implementation of the peace agreement. But all of the parties have wasted far too much time over the past three years, during which little progress has been made. We share the Secretary-General's concern that there has not been enough meaningful progress on the implementation of the peace agreement, and we agree that MINUSMA should focus more of its efforts and limited resources on the political process. The Council should use all available means to bring a sense of urgency to the process and encourage quick progress in uniting the Malian people around a common project. If we do not see progress, then we should seriously consider how long we can sustain the Mission without the serious and active partnership of the parties.

MINUSMA operates in an incredibly challenging security environment, with few resources available to focus on initiatives beyond the protection of the Mission itself. Given that reality, it is time to streamline the mandate to increase support to political engagement and scale down the Mission's focus on less critical activities. Such streamlining will necessitate tough choices as we seek to eliminate, refine or sequence mandated tasks that are either not directly supporting the political process or have stalled altogether.

We, like others, are also worried about growing instability in central Mali, and we support the review's recommendation that some reconfiguration of the force in the north is necessary. The consolidation of bases could reduce troop exposure and free MINUSMA resources to complete tasks beyond force protection.

Such an undertaking ought to be conducted at the discretion of the Mission leadership, with the safety of the Mission and its personnel in mind.

We also share the assessment that failure to contain the crisis in the central region could have a significantly detrimental impact on the stabilization and social cohesion of the country, risking a reversal of the small gains realized so far. We want to see MINUSMA prioritize the expansion of the force's footprint and its community engagement in central Mali to better address protection-of-civilian concerns. The strategic review also raises the concern that we share about the parameters of service provision to non-United Nations entities. The report (S/2018/541) rightly points out that support to non-United Nations entities risks jeopardizing the Mission's impartiality and its legitimacy in the political space.

Finally, the United States applauds the United Nations for its continued attention to human rights incidents, especially the investigations into numerous and credible allegations of violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law. We would like to echo the concerns regarding the Malian security forces, and we urge the Government of Mali to swiftly investigate allegations of human rights violations by its forces and hold accountable those responsible. For Mali's peace process to succeed and its population to unite around its Government, the people must not fear the very security forces that are sent to protect them.

As elections approach, Mali is at yet another crossroads. We in the Council are united in our support of Mali and in our desire to see the country's leaders come together to make peace, govern the entire country and ensure the Malian people's well-being, safety and opportunity.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation welcomes the convening of this meeting and thanks Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix for the valuable information he has provided.

(*spoke in French*)

I would also like to welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali, Mr. Tiéman Hubert Coulibaly, to New York.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

Peru notes with concern the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Mali, particularly in the centre and north of the country. Terrorist group activities, clashes among armed groups, attacks perpetrated against the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) personnel and the limited presence of the State in various areas of the country persist. However, we look forward to the new road map for the implementation of the 2015 Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and the role played by the Agreement Monitoring Committee, the Carter Center and the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2374 (2017) concerning Mali, as well as the establishment of the mixed units of the Operational Coordination Mechanism in Kidal and Timbuktu.

On this occasion, I will broach three specific issues: first, the political process; secondly, the security situation; and thirdly, the renewal of MINUSMA's mandate.

On my first point, after three years of waiting, it is necessary to accelerate the implementation of the peace agreement. The expectations generated by the new road map must not lead to further frustration. To that end, we deem it essential that Malian citizens take full ownership of the process and that the international community redouble its support. We wish to underline that holding free and fair presidential elections is crucial for the future of the country. It is important that the process be conducted in a stable political context, with regional and international backing, so as to guarantee the mass participation of the population and engage more women and young people in politics.

On the security situation, we commend the efforts of the Malian Government in implementing the programme for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants, as well as the reforms that it has been promoting to strengthen its security services. However, much remains to be done in that area. We believe that it is necessary to pay special attention to the activities of violent extremist groups, particularly in the centre of the country, which exploit the limited presence of the State to expand their influence and establish their own administration. That reinforces the vicious circle of intercommunal violence.

We also note with concern that law enforcement agencies share equal responsibility for increasing human rights violations, although they are the very

entities called upon to protect the population and the rule of law required to guarantee a sustainable peace. In response, it is necessary to strengthen the judiciary and guarantee access to justice. In that regard, we believe that it is important to work on the prevention and resolution of conflicts at the local level and to address their root causes. That implies promoting dialogue with communities and developing inclusive, transparent and accountable institutions that are capable of recognizing and addressing the legitimate demands of the population.

Thirdly, Peru believes that the support needed by the authorities and the Malian population to advance the country's political process and improve the security situation is bolstered by the strategic review on the activities of MINUSMA, which seeks to improve the Mission's performance and results in response to the current situation on the ground. To that end, we underscore the need to strengthen its support for the achievement of the peace agreement, as well as the political and security reforms that the country needs. We agree with the recommendation presented by the Secretary-General to the Council to renew the mandate of the Mission for one year.

Peru recognizes and supports the work that MINUSMA carries out in a particularly adverse environment and in complicated operational situations. We believe that its deployment on the ground is crucial to promoting stability in Mali. In addition, it is important that MINUSMA strengthen its coordination with the United Nations country team, because responding to the conflict and crisis and, ultimately, the building of a sustainable peace, require a multidimensional, coherent and integrated approach that includes all actors involved in the development of the country.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia thanks the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, for his briefing on the situation in the Republic of Mali and developments in the activities of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) on the ground. We also join our colleagues in welcoming the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Mali, Mr. Tiéman Hubert Coulibaly.

Five years have elapsed since the establishment of MINUSMA and three since the signing of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. Unfortunately, despite these events, Mali has not yet found the stability necessary to allow its people to live in an atmosphere of peace. The high degree of complexity and fragility of the humanitarian and security situation in that country, which has spread throughout the Sahel region, highlights the consequences of interventionism and regime change policies since, following the 2011 conflict in Libya, the side effects of that destabilization have included the regrettable results of chaos and terrorism.

Asymmetric threats, terrorist threats, endless clashes between armed groups and intercommunal violence continue to jeopardize the integrity and lives of the civilian population — not to mention the fact that they have slowed down the country's economic growth and development, extended and compounded the presence and consequences of transnational organized crime in the subregion, and significantly diminished the capacities of the Malian security forces, which have suffered complex attacks while defending themselves and protecting their population.

We are concerned that, in the northern and central sectors of Mali, the presence of mercenaries, drug and arms traffickers and human traffickers has turned their criminal activities into a modus vivendi that impedes the consolidation of the peace Agreement, and which is also increasingly contributing to the deterioration of the security and political situation.

We consider it crucial to continue supporting the process of implementing the peace agreement. In that regard, we call on the Malian Government and the international community to join forces in a more coherent and effective manner by building and strengthening measures of mutual trust. In that connection, we call once again on the countries that have pledged financial support for MINUSMA to honour their commitments; Mali urgently requires the main guarantor of this process, the international community, to vigorously promote the measures necessary to help the Malian Government to strengthen its presence throughout its territory, as well as to contribute to the full reconstitution of its armed forces in order to create adequate conditions for the protection of the civilian population.

We also commend the important efforts of the Government of Mali with regard to the appointment of interim authorities, the creation of legislative and electoral timetables, as well as the application of benchmarks for the effective implementation of the

peace Agreement and its provisions in the framework of the inclusive political dialogue. Prime Minister Maïga's visit to the most affected regions demonstrates the Malian Government's commitment to security. We must also consider the significant mobilization of resources generated from the national fund for the support of territorial collectivities in the regions of Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal, Taoudenni and Ménaka, which clearly give a fundamental boost to the State presence in those localities.

We also welcome the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Mali and Head of MINUSMA and thank him for his efforts. We recognize that the evolving challenges facing the Mission, including not only the violence of armed groups, but also the growing threat of violent extremism, transnational crime and asymmetric threats such as improvised explosive devices. With respect to the latter issue, we must commend the work of the United Nations Mine Action Service in implementing a framework for mitigating such threats through technical and strategic advice, which has reduced the number of victims of such threats.

With regard to the independent strategic review of MINUSMA, we are concerned about information regarding the lack of material capabilities that reduce its mobility and impede the efficient projection of its presence in the field. We also consider it important to continue to promote the implementation of the memorandum of understanding with the Malian Government to support the armed forces in the operational, intelligence, medical evacuation, explosive ordnance disposal and management and demining activities. Those aspects are of vital importance for both immediate and long-term stabilization in Mali. Therefore, the demobilized elements must be effectively integrated throughout the peace process through peacekeeping and post-conflict peacebuilding activities.

Finally, it is clear that the security situation in Mali and the Sahel region still presents major challenges. Bolivia highlights the outstanding efforts made by the regional and subregional organizations, led by the African Union in cooperation and coordination with the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel. We call on and strongly encourage the international community to continue to contribute technical support and economic and humanitarian cooperation to all initiatives that help the population achieve stability and definitive peace in Mali and the region.

Mr. Almunayekh (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for his valuable briefing on the latest developments in Mali, especially in the light of the upcoming presidential elections in July and the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). We also welcome the presence and participation of Mr. Tiéman Hubert Coulibaly, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali.

I would like to address three aspects as part of our discussion today, namely the political situation, the security situation and the renewal of MINUSMA's mandate.

First, on the political situation, we followed with interest the latest visit of the Secretary-General to Mali, particularly after all relevant parties have signed the new road map in March. We are pleased that real progress has been made recently in implementing the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. We also welcome the efforts of the Prime Minister to move the peace process forward, as well as the steps taken by his Government, in cooperation with all relevant parties, to activate the Operational Coordination Mechanism and to provide the delivery of basic services to northern Mali. We call on all parties to commit to implementing the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme as soon as possible.

We welcome the first report of the independent observer, the Carter Center, and its comments with respect to the implementation of the agreement. The report stresses the need to build trust between the Malian people and the Government while involving the people in the political peace process. We believe that achieving this objective will be totally contingent on the implementation of the basic elements of the peace Agreement, which is the main terms of reference to solve the crisis in Mali, including carrying out the necessary reforms and focusing on long-term and sustainable stability. We call on all parties to cooperate and to step up their efforts in order to make progress in this area for achieving the aspirations of the friendly Malian people.

We look forward to asmooth and transparent holding of presidential elections in July that includes all constituencies of Malian society. We appreciate the role of MINUSMA in preparing for the electoral process by

providing technical, security and logistical support. We encourage the Mission to continue its support in the coming period, especially after the elections, in order to reduce tensions among all parties. We also call on those parties to cooperate with the Malian authorities to ensure the security of the electoral process.

Secondly, concerning the security situation in Mali, we remain concerned as threats from terrorist groups continue, evidenced by the awful recent attack on the MINUSMA camp. We appreciate MINUSMA's efforts to contain that threat and to reduce any further damage. The role of peacekeepers in Mali remains important and critical, and the Security Council must ensure their protection by providing them with the necessary equipment in order to help them perform their work and shoulder their responsibilities. We are deeply saddened by the loss of life of 101 peacekeepers.

Terrorist groups pose a threat not only to peacekeepers, Malian forces and the French force, but also to Malian civilians, especially in central Mali. We are concerned by the deaths of more than 40 civilians during the period under review, and we welcome all the initiatives of the Government to counter these threats. Regrettably, we have noticed an increase in the use of improvised explosive devices, rising to almost 100 incidents since the beginning of this year. That is why the Mission must step up its efforts in training and outreach, and we encourage it to pursue its efforts in the future to reduce the damage resulting from these explosive devices.

Finally, regarding the renewal of the MINUSMA mandate, we welcome the findings of the strategic review led by Ms. Ellen Margrethe Løj, and we thank her very much for her efforts. We stress the need to take the review's recommendations into consideration in the next renewal of the mandate. The scope of the mandate must be clarified in order to ensure its effectiveness and success in advancing the political process in the country. We agree with the recommendation to prioritize the tasks of the Mission so as to ensure the full implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): Let me begin by thanking Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix for his very informative briefing on recent developments in Mali.

(*spoke in French*)

I take this opportunity to welcome the presence among us of His Excellency Mr. Tiéman Hubert Coulibaly, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali.

(*spoke in English*)

In the face of the upcoming renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), I would like to focus my intervention around three issues: the political process, the situation of women and the MINUSMA mandate itself.

First, on the political process, the visit of Prime Minister Soumeylou Boubèye Maïga to the northern regions, including Kidal, the ongoing registration of combatants, and progress in the implementation of the road map are perceived as positive steps in the peace process. The holding of inclusive, transparent and credible elections will be crucial to securing the gains achieved so far by the parties in the implementation of the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. It will therefore be crucial to create conditions for secure, peaceful and transparent elections. Efforts in this area, however, should be intensified and, despite the circumstances of the electoral process, the full implementation of the provisions of the agreement should be a top priority for the Malian authorities and completed as soon as possible.

We commend the neighbouring countries, including Algeria, for their support for the peace process in Mali and their commitment to ensuring the stabilization of that country and the Sahel region. However, the international community should increase its efforts to comprehensively address the crisis in the country. In that regard, I would like to reiterate our support for all necessary measures taken by the Security Council against individuals and entities engaged in actions or policies that threaten the implementation of the peace agreement in Mali.

Secondly, women continue to be underrepresented in the mechanisms for implementing and monitoring the peace agreement. Only 3 per cent of members of the mechanisms are women, which is a very low indicator. Regarding sexual and gender-based violence, according to UN-Women more than 1 in 10 females between the ages of 15 and 49 in Mali have experienced sexual violence. There is currently no national law in

Mali specifically addressing violence against women. Furthermore, women and the girls who suffer sexual and gender-based violence are often stigmatized or even excluded by their communities. Taking the aforementioned problems into account, strong language on gender equality and women's rights, as well as women's meaningful participation in the peace process, should be maintained in the upcoming resolution on Mali.

The discussion of the new MINUSMA mandate is relevant to the current security situation in Mali. Poland supports the proposal to revitalize the United Nations presence in the north in order to ensure the effectiveness and impact of the Mission, and to strengthen its presence in the centre of Mali, where the situation is critical and the number of civilian casualties is unprecedented.

We would also welcome a strengthened and more active leadership role for MINUSMA in Mali's peace process. There has been positive progress in the implementation of key security provisions of the peace agreement, but there remains much to be done in such areas as security sector reform, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, governance, institutional reform, the fight against impunity, and development. MINUSMA's good offices should be used in a more extensive manner to promote the rapid implementation of all the outstanding provisions of the political agreement so as to ensure the inclusivity of the peace process, including the promoton of the engagement of non-signatory actors.

Last but not least, we see added value in the continuation of MINUSMA support to the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, and Poland supports that effort. However, the leadership of MINUSMA has to ensure that this engagement would not negatively impact the Mission's own capacity.

In conclusion, Poland commends the tireless efforts of the men and women of MINUSMA in extremely difficult circumstances, and looks forward to the further extension of the MINUSMA mandate.

Mr. Orrenius Skau (Sweden): Let me begin by recognizing the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali. We thank him for being with us today.

Let me also thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his useful briefing to the Council today.

We welcome the progress that has been made in the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali in recent months. This includes the establishment of Operational Coordination Mechanisms in Kidal and Timbuktu and the Prime Minister's visit to the northern and central regions. It is now crucial that the implementation of the peace agreement be intensified and that the current momentum be maintained through the presidential election campaign. It is also imperative that the eventual winner of the presidential election continue to prioritize the peace process.

Inclusivity is an essential prerequisite for building a sustainable peace in any country. That is also true in Mali. As stated in the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/541), little progress has been made in ensuring women's meaningful engagement in the peace process. We must step up our efforts in this regard, and we call on all parties to urgently address this shortfall.

We are concerned by the lack of trust between the Government and opposition parties, highlighted most recently by violent clashes sparked by demonstrations. It is crucial that political actors and parties put aside their differences and work towards the holding of inclusive, transparent and credible elections, for the good of all Malians.

The continued deterioration of the situation in central Mali, leading to an unprecedented number of civilian casualties, remains of great concern. We are particularly worried by serious allegations of human rights abuses and violations in the context of counter-terrorism operations being carried out by the Malian armed forces. We call on the Government to step up protection efforts in the region and to conduct investigations of alleged abuses and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. Restoring trust in the Government and building the legitimacy of State functions in the region, including by providing basic social services, is essential. It will also be important to take local dynamics into account and address the fundamental causes of instability, including conflicts over resources and land, inequalities, exclusion and climate change.

Turning to the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), we welcome the conclusions of the independent strategic review, as presented in the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/541). It makes

important recommendations on how to better align the Mission's objectives and strategic vision with the realities on the ground and key provisions of the Peace Agreement, including those on decentralization, security-sector reform and reconciliation. The Peace Agreement is the only possible path to peace and stability in Mali, and supporting its implementation should remain the Mission's priority. For that reason, we support the idea of enhancing MINUSMA's political role as well as developing a pact for peace, which would link assistance to existing benchmarks and timelines, including progress on governance and institutional reforms.

We agree that the United Nations presence in Mali needs greater strategic coherence, since, along with integrated planning within the Mission, it remains essential to fulfilling the objectives of a common vision in support of the peace process and stabilization. It is clear that we must reinvigorate the United Nations efforts, together with those of the Malian authorities, to address the situation in central Mali. We support the recommendation of formulating a fully integrated plan that takes the multidimensional nature of the challenges in the region into account. Finally, it is important to ensure that the Mission's key civilian components, not least in the area of human rights, are safeguarded. In the light of the heavy security presence on the ground, monitoring and reporting on such issues is essential.

The situation in Mali has implications for the wider region. It is therefore important to ensure that the implementation of the Peace Agreement can proceed more rapidly and that peaceful, fair and transparent elections will be held in July. The United Nations has an important role to play in support of the national efforts and will continue to have our full support.

Mr. Zhang Dianbin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): We would like to thank you for convening today's meeting, Mr. President, and to welcome Foreign Minister Coulibaly to the Security Council. We would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his briefing.

The new Government in Mali has been working hard since it took office to advance the Malian peace process and implement the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, and has made some positive progress. The Government, the signatory armed groups and the relevant Malian stakeholders have made major efforts in that regard, which we welcome. Meanwhile, however, the security situation in northern and central Mali has got worse. There is rampant terrorist activity both in Mali iself and in neighbouring regions, which has a serious impact on the peace process. The international community should support Mali in its efforts to ensure peace and development.

First, it is important to assist the Malian parties in implementing the Peace Agreement. China hopes that the signatories to the Agreement will continue to demonstrate the necessary political will, work to implement all its provisions and engage in concerted reconstruction and development efforts so that the people can reap the benefit of a peace dividend. Basing its efforts on respect for Mali's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, the international community should continue to support the country's peace process and help it to enhance its own development and governing capacity. The Malian Government is making intensive preparations for the forthcoming election in July. We hope that its concerted efforts and those of the people of Mali will make it a success. The international community should support the people of Mali in making their own decisions. The sanction mechanism for Mali should provide objective support to the political process and function in strict compliance with the Security Council's mandate.

Secondly, the international community should help Mali improve its security capabilities. The security challenges in northern and central Mali are becoming increasingly complex, and at the Government's request, the international community should continue to support it in enhancing its security and counter-terror capacities, so that it can gradually take on the responsibility for maintaining the security of the entire country. The issue of peace and security is closely tied to the situation in the surrounding regions, so we need to take advantage of regional cooperation to ensure an integrated approach to dealing with the terrorist activities in Mali and beyond. China welcomes the initiative of the Group of Five for the Sahel in forming a Joint Force to address security threats such as regional terrorism. It is important that African countries seek greater strength through unity and thereby safeguard peace and security on their continent and in the rest of world. China commends the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) for the preparations it has made to support the Joint Force, and we hope that when conditions permit it will

begin providing the Joint Force with support as soon as possible.

Thirdly, we should support MINUSMA's work. China commends and supports MINUSMA and Special Representative Annadif in their efforts to promote the Malian peace process and strengthen the country's security capacity. The Mission's mandate expires at the end of June, and China will engage actively in the consultations on the draft resolution for its renewal. We hope that MINUSMA will continue to communicate with the Malian Government and help the country with its capacity-building and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. The security of MINUSMA's peacekeepers is a serious issue. The violent attacks this year have resulted in an increase in the number of casualties. China notes the positive measures that the Secretariat and the Mission have taken to improve peacekeepers' safety and security, and we hope that MINUSMA will continue to work to improve those areas and ensure that the necessary supplies and resources are in place. It should also step up its communication with troop-contributing countries and donors in order to ensure that the Mission has all the equipment and resources it needs to discharge its mandate and protect itself.

There are more than 400 Chinese peacekeepers in Mali serving in the medical, engineering and security areas, and their work has been much praised. China will continue to give its firm support to the cause of fostering peace and development for the people of Mali and to contributing to the country's peace, stability and prosperity alongside the rest of the international community.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I am very pleased to be able to greet and welcome His Excellency Mr. Coulibaly, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali. I would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his comprehensive briefing on the activities of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in supporting the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, as well as on the findings of the recent independent strategic review.

We note with satisfaction the renewed momentum that the Prime Minister has brought to the peace process and the other measures that have contributed to progress in implementing the Peace Agreement, as the Secretary-General mentions in his report (S/2018/541). We believe that the Secretary-General's solidarity visit to Mali from 29 to 31 May gave impetus to that positive momentum and sent a strong message in its recognition of the contribution that MINUSMA's sacrifices have made to peace and stability in Mali. We welcome the progress made in the operationalization of the mixed units of the Operational Coordination Mechanism in Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu, and the commitment that the signatories have made to the Mechanism. We also commend the Government's efforts to work with the signatories and the various stakeholders to foster an environment conducive to the holding of peaceful, credible and transparent elections throughout the country, especially the upcoming presidential election. However, in the light of the recent violent clashes sparked by the holding of demonstrations by opposition parties, we call upon all Malian parties to exercise maximum restraint, defuse political tensions through dialogue and work for the creation of a conducive environment for the smooth conduct of the elections. We also urge the speedy completion of the preparations for the conduct of peaceful and inclusive elections within the time frame set by the Constitution.

Despite the progress registered, the continuing deterioration of the security situation in Mali and the intercommunal clashes in the central parts of the country and violent attacks mainly targeting Tuareg communities in the south of the Ménaka region remain a source of concern. We strongly condemn the terrorist attacks against MINUSMA, the Malian defence and security forces, as well at the international forces and civilians in the north and centre of Mali. The destructive actions of the terrorists and armed groups are undermining the State's authority and worsening the humanitarian situation. Urgent action is needed to quickly reverse the situation.

Despite all the enormous political and security challenges and constraints related to human resources and equipment, MINUSMA forces are undertaking commendable tasks in supporting the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. We appreciate the continued support of MINUSMA, in cooperation with other international partners, for the Malian authorities' efforts to combat terrorism and international organized crime, including information and intelligence sharing, as well as planning, training

and capacity-building. The role of MINUSMA continues to be indispensable, and we support the extension of its mandate for another 12 months in line with the recommendations of the Secretary-General.

We note the outcomes of the independent strategic review of MINUSMA and we believe the Mission's robust posture should be maintained. We also note with great interest that the review recommended, as did the Secretary-General, strengthening MINUSMA's support to the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel through assessed contributions. We look forward to engaging in the discussion on the renewal of the mandate of the Mission.

Mr. Esono Mbengono (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Republic of Equatorial Guinea is grateful for the convening of this meeting and the comprehensive briefing provided by the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix. We are also pleased to welcome once again to New York His Excellency Mr. Tiéman Coulibaly, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali.

Just a few days after the three-year anniversary of the signing of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali as a result of the Algiers process, once again we have an opportunity to assess the progress achieved in the implementation of the Agreement and to evaluate the work and functioning of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). My Government welcomes the achievements made by the Government and the signatory movements in the implementation of the Agreement, as noted in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/541), although some challenges still remain. We especially underscore the timeline for priority actions and the road map — adopted, respectively, in January and March.

With regard to the measures and reforms on matters of security and defence, the redeployment of the army to several of the country's cities and the tentative resumption of mixed patrols composed of elements of the Malian defence and security forces and the platforms in the north, as agreed in 2016 within the framework of the Operational Coordination Mechanism, are positive signs that generate trust among the security forces and the various local armed groups. It should be recalled that the mixed patrols have been considered the impetus for the reconfiguration of the Malian armed forces, in which former members of rebel armed groups are included, and that the Mechanism's mission is fundamentally to protect and promote the progressive stabilization of the northern regions of the country.

Equatorial Guinea commends the efforts of the Government to stabilize the country and welcomes the Prime Minister's recent visit to the north, which we believe will contribute to finding a lasting solution to the problem.

Despite this encouraging climate, we believe that it is important that there be significant short- and medium-term progress in the economic and social spheres. In that regard, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea encourages the parties to redouble their efforts to ensure the timely implementation of the Agreement. Although the parties have reiterated their commitment to its implementation, the anticipated peace dividends, such as the provision of basic services, have not yet materialized for the population, despite the Agreement's provisions to establish a strategy for the development of the northern regions.

We hope that this positive trend of progress in the implementation of the Agreement will continue through the holding of the presidential elections in July. In that regard, my Government endorses the 3 June communiqué of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission calling on political actors in Mali to act with restraint and to refrain from any action that could increase tension and provoke greater political polarization. It is also important for the political leaders in Mali to ensure the holding of presidential elections under the necessary conditions of peace, security and transparency, so that they contribute to ending the crisis in Mali.

The political process in Mali must continue, as reflected in the country's Constitution. That requires strict compliance with the planned timetable for elections, namely, presidential elections now and legislative elections later. In the light of the mandate of MINUSMA under resolution 2364 (2017), the Mission must continue to provide technical support and exercise its good offices for the holding of the elections. We believe that those are aspects that should be included in the Mission's mandate.

My Government commends the efforts of the Secretary-General in conducting the independent strategic review of MINUSMA and agrees with its primary recommendations, namely, to support national

dialogue in order to promote ownership of the Agreement by the people of Mali and a strengthening of the nation beyond State reform; to promote a common vision among regional and international actors in support of the peace and stabilization process; and to promote a peace agreement among the Government, the Security Council, the United Nations and international partners under which assistance would be provided in accordance with clear reference points, including with regard to progress, good governance and political reforms.

MINUSMA has helped to stabilize the situation in the country. We believe that its current form has been very useful for the country and, therefore, we think it should continue as such. We support the renewal of its current mandate.

Mr. Temenov (Kazakhstan): We express our appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his comprehensive briefing. My delegation joins others in warmly welcoming Mr. Tiéman Coulibaly, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali, to today's meeting.

We fully endorse the recommendations of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/541) and would like to make the following observations for the Council's consideration.

First, our main priority should be to accelerate the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. Kazakhstan welcomes the increased cooperation between the Malian Government and other signatories, which has resulted in progress as evident in the deployment of mixed patrols in Kidal and Timbuktu and the registration of combatants eligible for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. We commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the African Union and the other relevant actors for their important role in facilitating the dialogue among the signatories.

My delegation encourages the parties to continue to show genuine will in advancing the implementation of the Agreement. We underscore the need to focus on the three long-term strategic pillars of the Agreement that are emphasized in the independent observer's report. We reiterate that the Agreement's key provisions with regard to encouraging national reconciliation, ensuring basic services and strengthening resilience, economic development, good governance and the rule of law are essential to the process of establishing lasting peace and stability in Mali. The genuine inclusion of women and young people in the peace process and in decision-making is also important to enduring stability. Another crucial task is ensuring the transparent, fair, peaceful and inclusive conduct of the presidential elections in July. We welcome the Government's electoral reforms and call on the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the international community to provide adequate financial and technical assistance to the Government, which is crucial to the success of the electoral process.

Addressing the deteriorating humanitarian situation in northern and central Mali is equally important. We therefore call on international partners and donors to fund the humanitarian response plan for 2018. We urge all parties to comply with international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

With regard to the upcoming renewal of the MINUSMA mandate, we support the independent strategic review's recommendations, including on ensuring a tailored approach to the protection of civilians mandate and prioritizing the Mission's tasks so as to increase its role in advancing the peace process. In order to address the Mission's capability gaps, it is critical to provide the contingents with better equipment and predeployment training commensurate with the situation of asymmetric conflict that Mali presents. It is also worth considering the concept of equipment-contributing countries.

Kazakhstan firmly believes that fully operationalizing the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel will substantially strengthen the efforts of MINUSMA and the Malian national security forces to combat terrorism and other cross-border threats. Finally, like others, we strongly condemn the violent attacks by terrorist groups on civilians, humanitarian workers, the Malian security forces and MINUSMA personnel. In conclusion, we would like to commend Special Representative Annadif and all the brave men and women representing the United Nations in Mali who are committed to peace in such a hazardous and challenging environment.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

We would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix for his briefing. We welcome Mr. Tiéman Hubert Coulibaly, Minister for Foreign

Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali, to today's meeting.

We support Bamako's efforts to normalize the situation in Mali. We note that in the past few months the process of implementing the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali has somewhat accelerated. The mixed patrols have finally been deployed to Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu and the processes for the cantonment and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants are continuing. There have been no significant violations in the preparations for the upcoming 29 July presidential elections. In that regard, we urge all Malian stakeholders to refrain from provocative action and work together in order to ensure that they go off peacefully.

However, there are still many reasons to be concerned. The geographic scope of terrorist and extremist activity has significantly expanded and we are seeing inter-ethnic clashes. The authorities' presence in many areas of central and northern Mali is still extremely limited, and unfortunately people's basic social needs there are not being met, while the humanitarian situation in the country is close to the crisis levels of 2012. In such circumstances there is nothing for the local young people to do besides joining the ranks of terrorist or criminal groups.

We have carefully read the Secretary-General's report on the situation in Mali (S/2018/541) and the independent strategic review of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). In general, we agree with their views and conclusions. Given the fact that in five years the crisis in Mali has not been resolved despite the peacekeeping presence there, we have to reconsider the current approach. We agree with the strategic review's assessment that it is unlikely that the situation in the country can be normalized by military means alone. We must focus on political mechanisms that can be developed and implemented by the Malians themselves. The only way to resolve the country's numerous complex issues is for its citizens themselves to play a direct leading role in the processes, which of course need international and regional support. If it is backed by the Malians themselves, we believe the strategic review's idea of a pact for peace could be a basis for making progress.

We also support the Secretary-General's proposal to review the priority areas of MINUSMA's work with a view to ensuring that it can fulfil its political tasks. First, however, the process should be gradual, and secondly, it should not interfere with the Mission's task of protecting the civilian population and helping to re-establish the national security forces. The issue of supplying the Mission with material and technical resources, including helicopters, is also very urgent, and we ask the countries that have made respective commitments to fulfil them as soon as possible.

It will be difficult to achieve a settlement in Mali without normalizing the situation in the region as a whole, while the situation in the country is a significant factor for security in Africa in general. We support the concrete steps taken by the Group of Five for the Sahel to establish their Joint Force in order to combat terrorism and organized crime, and we hope it will be fully deployed as soon as possible.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali.

Mr. Coulibaly (Mali) (*spoke in French*): I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of June and to assure you of our full cooperation. I would also like to congratulate the delegation of Poland on its exemplary conduct of the Council's work during the previous month. I would like to express our gratitude to all of the members of the Council for their ongoing support to the peace process in Mali. And I thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his support and for his recent visit to Mali from 29 to 30 May in solidarity with the Malian people and the Blue Helmets.

My delegation takes note of the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/541), and we thank Mr. Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for his comprehensive and faithful presentation of the report, including on the recent developments in Mali that have occurred since it was published.

First, we welcome the fact that the report emphasizes the recent progress made in the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, including the start of operations for the Operational Coordination Mechanism in Kidal, Timbuktu and Gao; the Government's provision of heavy weapons

to strengthen the capabilities of the Mechanism's Gao battalion, considering that it has been operational since 2017; the ongoing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, with preregistration of former combatants; the establishment of interim authorities in regions that had been awaiting them and the provision of 8 billion African Financial Community francs in investment and technical support. Such progress also includes the transmission to the National Assembly of a draft law on the creation of territorial authorities in the regions of Ménaka and Taoudenni and the commencement of work on security sector reform. In addition to the total end of the belligerence between the Malian parties since the signing of the Agreement in 2015, those achievements constitute important steps in the peace process in Mali.

I am also pleased that the report underlines the determination of the Malian parties to work together to continue to step up the implementation of the Agreement. The Malian parties reaffirmed, with one voice, such commitment to the Secretary-General at his meeting with the members of the Agreement's Monitoring Committee in Bamako on 30 May.

The progress made speaks to the firm and constant political will of the President of the Republic of Mali, the Government and all the Malian parties to implement the Agreement, together with the international community. Such political will has been expressed through various initiatives since 2013 — beginning with the preliminary Ouagadougou agreement, the generalized decentralization of states in 2014, national meetings, the Conference on National Understanding, the charter on national understanding, the law on national understanding, which absolves all those involved in armed rebellions, excluding those who were prosecuted for serious crimes, and our own petition to the Council for a sanctions regime to encourage all parties to the Agreement to implement it. I want to remind members of the Council of that because it is important to bear in mind.

It is true that the implementation of the Agreement is experiencing some delays, but the factors causing those delays have been gradually identified. I would like to add that the intense work carried out by the Council and MINUSMA, and related efforts of the Government, have made possible the undertaking of efforts that Council members have themselves observed. There is a need to step up that approach to continue along those lines so that while we prepare for the presidential elections, which were broadly mentioned today, the implementation of the Agreement continues without our efforts losing momentum.

The situation in the central part of the country is one of the Government's major concerns with regard to attacks by terrorist groups and incidents involving communities, as well as the lack of agro-pastoral production to ensure food security. That is why we believe that the integrated security plan for central regions, adopted in February 2017, is the ideal framework for the holistic response we are providing, with the support of our international partners.

As the Security Council prepares to adopt a draft resolution to extend the mandate of MINUSMA for one year, it is important to share with Council members the real expectations of our Government. In that connection, I will begin by addressing the support needed for the electoral process. As members know, the first round of the presidential elections is scheduled for 29 July — 45 days from now. The holding of those elections, under the required conditions of transparency and credibility, is crucial for the consolidation of democracy and the legitimacy of the institutions in our country. That is why the Government, in upholding the Bamako declaration of 3 November 2000, is requesting substantial support from MINUSMA, particularly in the areas of security and logistics.

At the same time, the implementation of the relevant provisions of the Agreement must continue. We urge MINUSMA to take measures to enable Mali to re-establish its authority over its entire territory, protect civilian populations, support the redeployment of the Administration, support the provision of basic social services to the population, strengthen cooperation with the national defence and security forces and accelerate planned support to the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel for its effective operationalization.

In order to enable MINUSMA to fully and properly implement its mandate, the Government of Mali requests that the capacities of that important Mission be strengthened in terms of training, logistics and operational resources. With regard to the reconfiguration of MINUSMA forces referred to in the report, the Government of the Republic of Mali expresses its preference for maintaining and strengthening the current arrangements in view of the challenges involved in organizing and securing the

presidential, legislative, regional and local elections, which run from July 2018 to August 2019. Also, the reconfiguration, as proposed, could entail, if it were implemented now, the risk of creating a security vacuum, which could jeopardize the progress achieved in the peace process and regional stability.

In that context, the most credible option is to expedite the implementation of the relevant provisions of articles 21 and 54 of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation, which stipulate, inter alia, that the redeployment of the reconstituted armed and security forces shall be carried out under the leadership of the Operational Coordination Mechanism with the support of MINUSMA and that the international community is the guarantor of the scrupulous implementation of the Agreement.

The report under review indicates an increase in cases of human rights violations, including inhumane and degrading treatment, arbitrary detention and extrajudicial executions, with particular reference to the Malian defence and security forces working in the context of anti-terrorist operations. In that regard, as I have said before when addressing the Council, I would like to strongly reiterate the commitment of the Government of the Republic of Mali to respect, and ensure respect for, human rights. I reaffirm here my country's full commitment to the successful investigation of every case reported in the report. In that connection, I note that administrative and disciplinary measures have been taken with regard to military units deployed in the regions concerned, military prosecutors have been seized to clarify the reported cases and the results of those investigations will be published as soon as possible.

As I have had to emphasize before the Council, the Government of Mali, in compliance with the directives of the President of Republic, observes a zero-tolerance policy on human rights violations. We have specifically asked MINUSMA to share with us the information it has so that we can work together to ensure that all investigation processes are completed and judicial action is taken if necessary. In that regard, I welcome the Secretary-General's recognition, in paragraphs 37 and 38 of his report, that the Government has clearly reiterated its commitment to not tolerate abuses against civilians.

The Government of Mali is aware of the urgent need to make the presidential elections on 29 July as transparent and peaceful as possible. It is working to that end daily and without respite. It is in that context that a consultation framework has been set up, including the political parties of the presidential majority, the opposition and civil society. At the same time, I can assure members of the Council that the material and logistical arrangements are in place to ensure free, reliable and peaceful elections. An audit of the electoral register was conducted, which was carried out by a team from the International Organization of la Francophonie that found the register to be reliable. I would mention that the chair of the audit committee was a representative from the opposition. New voter registration cards have been printed and will be distributed in the coming days. A consensus-based revision of the electoral law was conducted and put to the vote in the National Assembly. The Malian opposition did not vote against it. That demonstrates a genuine space for dialogue and highlights efforts to ensure full inclusion in the preparations for elections and the full participation of all Malian stakeholders in the political process.

The Government will do its utmost to ensure that elections are conducted in a safe environment across the country. More than 11,000 members of the Malian defence and security forces will be deployed, in addition to our MINUSMA partners, the French Operation Barkhane force and contributions from signatory movements. We must commend and thank all our partners for the assistance that each has provided to ensure success in the upcoming elections, which will be important for peacebuilding in Mali and in the Sahel.

As the Council knows, combating terrorist groups and other transnational organized crime elements remains a priority for the countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel. To that end, I again request that the Council ensure that the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel be granted a mandate under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations and predictable and permanent funding, including through the United Nations.

I would like to reiterate that the Government of Mali remains fully determined to honour its commitments in implementing the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, which, for us, is the only reference framework for a lasting settlement of the crisis and the only political endeavour that could help us rebuild national unity.

Lastly, on behalf of the Government and the people of Mali, I should like once again to pay tribute to the memory of all Malians and non-Malians alike, both military personnel and civilians, who have lost their lives in Mali.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.